

Message Text

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SUBJ: PRESS REACTION TO ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION

1. WEEKEND SWISS GERMAN PRESS COMMENTED EXTENSIVELY ON ITALIAN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS, EXPRESSING THE VIEW THAT ITALY STOOD AT A TURNING POINT JUST AS IT DID IN 1921 AND 1948.

2. NEUE ZURCHER ZEITUNG CARRIED LENGTHY EDITORIAL SIGNED BY DEPUTY CHIEF EDITOR METTLER WHO EXPRESSED VIEW THAT WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (CPI), ALL ITALIAN PARTIES ARE AT LEAST PARTLY USED UP. VOTERS WANTING SOMETHING NEW CANNOT TURN TO THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS OR CATHOLIC CHURCH. THE ONLY MODERN ITALIAN HEAVY-WEIGHTS ARE ENTERPRISE LEADERS LIKE AGNELLI AND PIRELLI WHO HAVE DECLINED POLITICAL ROLES. METTLER CONSIDERED THAT BOTH SECRETARY KISSINGER AND AGNELLI PLAYED USEFUL AND NECESSARY ROLES. HAD THE US SHOWN "UNDERSTANDING" FOR POPULAR FRONT GOVTS IN ITALY AND FRANCE, THE SHOCK WOULD HAVE BEEN GREATER THAN ANY IRRITATION ABOUT ALLEGED U S "INTERFERENCE" IN THEIR DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. METTLER WROTE THAT THE CPI'S STRUCTURE CONTINUES TO BE LENINISTIC; IT STILL NEEDS TO LOOSEN ITS BONDS TO MOSCOW IN A CONVINCING WAY. "IT IS GOING TO REQUIRE MUCH MASSIVE PROOF OVER AN EXTENDED TIME PERIOD BEFORE ONE CAN BELIEVE IN A BASIC CHANGE OF HEART. UNTIL THEN

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NEITHER ITALY NOR EUROPE CAN AFFORD TO LEAVE THE CPI

WITH IRREVERSIBLE POSITIONS". METTLER ENDS WITH
EXPRESSION OF CONFIDENCE THAT THE COMMON SENSE OF THE
ITALIAN VOTER CAN BE TRUSTED.

3. THE CONSERVATIVE "BUND" (BERN) STRUCK A COMMON
NOTE IN NOTING THE FAILURE OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS
AND CATHOLIC CHURCH. IT CONSIDERS IT ENTIRELY POSSIBLE
THAT THE JUNE ELECTIONS WILL SHOW GAINS FOR THE CPI BUT
WITH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS STILL THE STRONGEST PARTY.
HOWEVER, THIS WOULD LEAD TO THE SAME OLD GAME OF
"MINORITY GOVTS ASSISTED FROM THE OUTSIDE, ENDLESS
DISCUSSIONS AND CRISES".

4. NATIONAL ZEITUNG (BASEL) SAID THAT ITALY'S CHRISTIAN
DEMOCRATS WERE DISCREDITED BY INEFFECTIVENESS AND CORRUPTION.
IT EXPECTS THE LEFT TO WIN A NARROW VICTORY AND BELIEVES
THE ELECTION COULD BE DECISIVE FOR ITALY AND EUROPE.

5. MOST COMMENTS SEEMED RESIGNED TO COMMUNIST
PARTICIPATION IN THE NEXT ITALIAN GOVT. WHILE
DEFINITELY UNENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF
SUCH A DEVELOPMENT, THE PRESS SEEMS EQUALLY DISPIRITED
ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR A CONTINUATION OF RECENT POLITICAL
PARALYSES AND INEFFECTIVENESS IN ITALY, IF THE EXISTING
BALANCE OF POWER WERE MAINTAINED.
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